

Submission to Academia Letters

Rethinking the Coffee Producer's Resilience in Indonesia

Kurniawan Arif Maspul, International Open University

Fina Amalia, International Open University

Cafe has become a place that is a second home after family and institutions; becoming a gathering place for many levels of community from businessmen and politicians to the social middle and lower economic class, from researchers to high school students who gather outside class hours, from business to academic discussion. Currently, people live in a society with all the technological sophistication at our disposal to reach the breadth of daily interactions, starting with taking every photo of a cup of coffee.

If the coffee consumer turns to the black drink that fills the cup within a minute, the coffee consumer might ask about the coffee origins. But unfortunately, the coffee consumer did not have time to jolt his mind to that one question. The sweetness of specialty coffee has passed its past, forgetting the audience from the bitter history of coffee at the time of the advancement of coffee civilisation in today's modernist community. Meanwhile, people welcome the "third wave" coffee culture generation, which describes a generational culture that gives a higher culinary appreciation to coffee and all that is related to it and requires: focus on the intricacies of taste, origin, and process (Colonna-Dashwood, 2017). Moreover, it's perhaps too rare to feel the classic beauty of the cafe room design on the corner of Surabaya street, or the grandeur of the cafe in a luxury mall area in South Jakarta, or the unique colonialism design in Jakarta's historical? The issue will be never far away between history and colonialism.

Furthermore, why colonialism? Most decolonisation occurred after 1945;

Academia Letters preprint.

©2021 by the authors – Open Access – Distributed under CC BY 4.0

which Anthony King defines colonisation as the establishment and maintenance, for a long time, of dominion over aliens who are separated and are under the rule of a ruler (King, 1990). In other terms, Mahoney explains that colonialism is a great force of change in the modern era. From the Americas to the continents of Asia and Africa, colonial expansion brought Europeans and their institutions worldwide (Mahoney, 2010). Likewise, with the deepest fold of the story of colonialism, with the existence of slavery. Millennials may not be able to fully understand the slavery in the story of coffee colonialism in Indonesia. Boomgard mentions the rich history of slavery in Indonesia in the past; slavery in Indonesia is also featured in historical monographs in cities where slavery is prominent and rich historical sources (Boomgaard, 2008). Colonialism and slavery have become common knowledge of Indonesians; a bitter history of the archipelago's past. Then concerning coffee, Indonesia has extraordinary cultivation potential, especially with its Arabica heirlooms forced to be planted along with Java, Sulawesi, and Sumatra.

Then what's with the coffee? This magical fruit has been in demand and has been a sacred drink since the fourteenth century. The myth of the Kaldi goat in Ethiopia was brought by the world's famous coffee historian, Ukers. Countries in the world have previously been colonised to explore the wealth of their land, especially in the Middle Ages. Wherefrom *qahwa* (قهوة) in Aleppo Syria, there are many beautiful pronunciations after; *chaoua*, *cahoa*, *coho*, *copha*, *caphe*, *cahua*, *café*, *cafe*, *kaffee*, *kahvi*, *cafea*, *kava*, *kawa*, *kaffia*, *kaffe*, *kahue*, *cafeo*, *gehve*, *bunbund*, *kapi-kottai*, *kapri-vittulu*, *kahi*, *kohi*, *kafva*, *kaufee*, *bonn*, *houri caff*, and coffee (Ukers, 1922).

From South America, India to Asia, Indonesia is no exception, prosperous land and the sweetest glance for the former Colonialists. Coffee colonialism has entered Indonesia from the sixteenth century where coffee came to Western Europe via Dutch sea traders from the descendants of coffee trees in Yemen; coffee trees were planted in the Amsterdam botanical gardens, whose cuttings were used to establish coffee plantations in Sri Lanka (later known as Ceylon) in 1658. Then, from 1696 onwards, Dutch traders established similar coffee plantations in Indonesia (Brink, 2017). From this coffee colonialism history, it represents the forced labour system in Indonesia. In Indonesia and other parts of the country that were once known as colonialism, the nineteenth-century in-

terpretation of environmental history, especially regarding coffee plantations, clearly shows that the colonial government ignored the welfare of local communities and neglected ecological and environmental sustainability (Saravanan, 2004).

The emergence of coffee colonialism is also a source of slavery; Indonesia is a strategic country to become a source of slavery and was drawn as one of the world's slavery routes from Asia in the seventeenth century. Marks Vink states that the slavery system in the Dutch Indian Ocean drew slave labour from three interlocking and overlapping subregional circuits: the westernmost, the East African circuit, Madagascar, and the Mascarene Islands (Mauritius and Réunion); central, South Asian course of the Indian subcontinent (Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal/Arakan coast); and the easternmost, Southeast Asia Malaysia, Indonesia, New Guinea (Irian Jaya), and the southern Philippines (Vink, 2003). Even in the 1780s, sea raids had passed through the waters of Southeast Asia, although it was common in the past to occur far more frequently than the colonial authorities acknowledged (Warren, 2014). What about the fate of coffee at that time? Coffee is one of the greatest assets for the Netherlands, and with this coffee, the classic Indonesians became the best slaves for the Dutch in developing the Dutch East Indies foreign exchange. Coffee was an important cash crop for the Dutch, and Indonesians were forced to grow coffee for Dutch trade purposes (Brink, 2017).

Coffee slavery in the past can be felt through one of the novels written by Eduard Douwes Dekker, Max Havelaar: Or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trade Company. The story is written by the young German Stern, working for Droogstoppel. Takes place in Lebak in Java, Dutch East Indies, where the protagonist Max Havelaar is introduced. At the end of the book, Stern's writing is interrupted by the original author: Multatuli, "Yes, I, Multatuli, who have suffered a lot, I take the pen. I don't make any excuses for the shape of my book, that shape is deemed appropriate to get my object. It has a double end" (Dekker, 1968). The novel sparked heated debate in the Netherlands after its publication. The discussion about social impact has resulted in a fierce social forum from a European setting in the Middle Ages. Even right after its publication, Multatuli had both supporters and opponents until a member of the Dutch parliament in 1860 stated that the novel had an incredible impact on

Dutch society (Brink, 2017).

Discrimination in coffee colonialism continued regularly and focused on growing crops that would not be consumed by the farmers themselves or their families. Colonialist policies often forced farmers to give up part of their land with food crops for colonial crops and calculate taxes for the farmers themselves (Koss, 2020). This is the general understanding of efficiency for colonialists by vitalising the economy of the colonised country as best as possible to bring the fruits of colonialism, the biggest commodity at that time. The demands of the Dutch colonial government against the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies were enacted in land taxes and were often paid in the form of agricultural crops; among them is coffee.

After colonialism, Indonesian coffee farmers still facing some challenges following the world coffee sales are currently still considering the C market price, systematised by the agreement in 1989. Indonesia and 42 member countries of the world's exporters follow the agreed policy in exporting coffee with prices that have been adjusted for Arabica and Robusta. Encouraging farmers to follow government policies, it is often forgotten that market reforms in developing countries encourage governments to promote exports, which, in this case, is a coffee commodity (Ponte, 2001).

The influence of colonialism in Indonesia, in general, has provided agricultural progress in the coffee industry; unfortunately, the welfare of the farmers themselves has been forgotten. This inequality can still be felt today, where the world coffee price crisis affects all sectors from upstream to downstream. Until the Specialty Coffee Association initiated a response to coffee prices due to the unsustainability of global coffee supply chains, "In August 2018, commodity futures coffee prices fell below US\$1,001 per pound, well below the sustainable production costs of most coffee farmers for the first time in 12 years" (Specialty Coffee Association, 2019).

Indonesia's independence in the past brings the story of coffee in a different episode. Fairtrade continues the story of Max Havelaar on a new level through the journey of the modern coffee industry. With Fairtrade certification, farmers will receive \$0.20/lb. The high coffee grades that go to farmers will help improve farmers' lives (Specialty Coffee Association, 2019). However, this certification has criticised other problems, including the minimum price, which is too low and

does not consider appropriate livelihoods from production costs or contributions to farmer household financing. Then the issue of membership fees to get this certification also limits the participation of farmers; not all farmers can afford it. Not to mention that Fairtrade cannot promise that the coffee sold can provide favourable appreciative prices for farmers (Brink, 2017).

It was interesting when Jusuf Kalla took in his concern and brought this coffee issue to the international forum where he said, “I want to underline the two major impacts of this coffee price crisis. First, small farmers are the victims who are the most disadvantaged. Small farmers, not small farmers industry or consumers.” This is a strong statement by the Indonesian government in its seriousness in bringing up the issue of the coffee crisis. He continued, “More than 25 million small coffee farmers around the world are struggling to meet their daily needs. Indonesia alone has 1.8 million coffee farmers” (Mursid, 2019). After Indonesian independence, the coffee community is needed to contribute to domestic farmers. Indonesia is currently one of Robusta and Arabica’s largest exporters (Devi Chandra, 2013). Indeed, sometimes it fluctuates with up and down market prices for coffee imports, even Indonesia itself has felt a big challenge in decline in coffee sales in 1986-1989 and 2000-2004 by 5.5 per cent to 6.7 per cent (Kustiari, 2016).

With the painful journey of coffee in Indonesia’s past, people can see the past hardships to support the Dutch East Indies in developing its economy through colonialism. That has been felt by ancestors, the legacy of that the coffee community felt independence until today Indonesia is independent at the age of 76 years of independence. But why do farmers still feel that independence to satisfy coffee connoisseurs in Indonesia and even the world? Some coffee professionals think that coffee farmers in Indonesia still cannot be rewarded according to their hard work. The age of farmers is getting older and is an obstacle for future generations to replace farmers. Therefore, the heroism of farmers and their resilience in maintaining a life of coffee could illustrate a complicated problem in the future.

The Indonesian community might change this mindset to support the sustainability of coffee in the future, starting with us as a coffee community and national organisations that support coffee and the government as policymakers. The dilemma felt by some people that not supposed farmers nowadays to feel as

if they still experienced the coffee colonialism from a modern perspective. Instead, the community might strive for coffee farmers to feel social equality with the Indonesian community, such as the fair coffee prices that have always been an issue, from farmers to the welfare of their own farming families. Opinions may be shared for anyone, but it is time for Indonesian society; as one of the world's largest coffee-producing countries, the society is actors to participate in eradicating modern colonialism in coffee resilience. Furthermore, contributing to the agricultural process (climate change) and removing the farmer's hardships (certification and insurance) in improving the sustainability of the welfare of coffee farmers in making the better legacy of colonialism. Finally, behind the beautiful colonial architecture of the Café in the corner of Fatahillah Jakarta and the trend of young people gathering accompanied by a coffee cup, coffee will find its better future's legacy.

References

- Boomgaard, P. (2008). Human Capital, Slavery and Low Rates of Economic and Population Growth in Indonesia 1600-1910. *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 83-93.
- Brink, D. t. (2017). From Colonialism to Fairtrade: Power Struggles Between Indonesia and the Netherlands Through the Perspective of Coffee. *Uppsala, Dept. of Archaeology and Ancient History*.
- Colonna-Dashwood, M. (2017). *The Coffee Dictionary*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Dekker, E. D. (1968). *Max Havelaar; or, The coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas.
- Devi Chandra, R. H. (2013). Prospek Perdagangan Kopi Robusta Indonesia di Pasar Internasional. *JIIA, Vol. 1 No. 1*.
- King, A. D. (1990). *Urbanism, Colonialism, and The World-Economy; Cultural and Spatial Foundations of the World Urban System*. London: Routledge.

- Koss, E. (2020). Coffee + Colonialism: 101 Naming Coffee's Original Sin. *Barista Magazine*, Vol 16 Issue 3, 66-69.
- Kustiari, R. (2016). Perkembangan Pasar Kopi Dunia dan Implikasinya Bagi Indonesia. *Forum penelitian Agro Ekonomi*, 43-55.
- Mahoney, J. (2010). *Colonialism and postcolonial development, Spanish America in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mursid, F. (2019, September 27). *JK Bicara Imbas Krisis Harga Kopi Dunia di PBB*. Retrieved from Republika: <https://nasional.republika.co.id/berita/pyfpzy335/jk-bicara-imbas-krisis-harga-kopi-dunia-di-pbb>
- Ponte, S. (2001). Behind the Coffee Crisis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, 4410-4417.
- Saravanan, V. (2004). Colonialism and coffee plantations: Decline of environment and tribals in Madras Presidency during the nineteenth century. *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 465-488.
- Specialty Coffee Association. (2019). *Price Crisis Response Initiative: Summary of Work*. California: Specialty Coffee Association.
- Ukers, W. H. (1922). *All About Coffee*. Alexandria: The Bibliotheca Alexandrina.
- Vink, M. (2003). The World's Oldest Trade: Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century. *Journal of World History*, 131-177.
- Warren, J. F. (2014). Trade for Bullion to Trade for Commodities and Piracy: China, the West, and the Sulu Zone 1768-1898. *Persistent Piracy: Maritime Violence and State-Formation in Global Historical Perspective*, 152-172.